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CIA chief employs reporters as spooks

By I. William Hill

At the American Society of Newspaper Editors convention in Washington last week, editors like A.M. Rosenthal, *New York Times*, and Gene Patterson, *St. Petersburg Times*, expressed both surprise and dismay when Admiral Stansfield Turner, director of CIA, disclosed that in three separate instances since 1977 he had personally approved the use of journalists for secret intelligence operations.

The editors said they had understood that CIA policy since December of 1977 had been never to use American journalists in intelligence operations.

Turner declared, however, that it had been openly revealed at the time that, with the approval of the CIA Director, journalists could be used in very exceptional situations.

"What if we have a terrorist situation and the only way to gain information is through use of a journalist. That is the kind of circumstance I mean, a situation wherein the real security of the United States is involved."

"Do you think it's worthwhile to cast into doubt the ethical and professional position of every foreign correspondent?" Rosenthal demanded. "This endangers not only the ethics of our work but the physical existence of our foreign correspondents."

Patterson agreed with Rosenthal and announced he would try to set Admiral Turner straight by editorials in the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Turner went on to say it would be "naïve" to think that a foreign government would assume that journalists of any nationality are free of association with intelligence agencies.

"Furthermore," he said, "I would be ashamed to think I needed a law to protect my ethical reputation."

In his prepared speech, Turner told the editors that in none of the three cases where he had approved use of journalists had they actually been used, due to a change in the situation that made them no longer required.

In response to questions, Turner said no journalists are now actively employed or paid either here or abroad as CIA agents. He said he had no current plans to use or hire any, but that if a situation presented itself in which he felt such a practice was justified, he wouldn't hesitate to recruit one.

Turner expressed surprise at the negative reaction of ASNE members and suggested they were "naïve."

"I can't understand," he said, "why you think if you accept an assignment from me to aid the United States you are no longer free."

Asked if, in the event he did hire a correspondent to work for the CIA, he would so inform the correspondent's employer, Turner said he regarded that as an obligation of the correspondent hired.

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